

Below is a message issued by DAIL's Developmental Disabilities Services Division in response to recent communication about developmental disabilities services (DDS) in Vermont and the inclusion of people with autism.

*First and foremost, I am writing to clarify that the Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) Imagine the Future Task Force did not make a recommendation to limit or eliminate eligibility for DDS for people of any age with autism with IQs over 70. While there was a discussion about eligibility at one of the meetings, there was in fact no general consensus on any changes to the current eligibility criteria. The Task Force, which was established by Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) Commissioner Susan Wehry, M.D., included a wide array of stakeholders and was charged with helping to give input into the future vision of DDS. The Task Force was also clear that any change from the current eligibility would require much deeper analysis and input from a wide range of stakeholders. This will be reflected in the final report of the Task Force, which has not yet been issued. In addition to submitting the report to Commissioner Susan Wehry, the report will also be shared with the DDS State Program Standing Committee and the DAIL Advisory Board. Of course, the final report will also be posted on the DAIL website and widely available to any member of the public.*

*I also wish to acknowledge the anxiety that this issue has caused for yourself and others. In my role, I hear from so many people who receive services and their families about how important the services and supports are to them and the difference that they make in their lives. Please know that we recognize that any change to the current eligibility criteria would be an issue of great magnitude and is something that we would not take lightly. It would require very serious and thorough analysis and significant input, not just from the State Program Standing Committee and the DAIL Advisory Board, but from a large array of stakeholders, and most especially from the people who receive services, their families and guardians. I hope this helps to address some of your concern. Thank you.*